

Context Sensitive Committee Meeting Minutes

To: Attendees and Invitees Date: November 28, 2005

From: H.W. Lochner

Project: SR-12 Environmental Assessment
STP-0012(8)60E

Meeting Location: BLM Visitor Center
Escalante, Utah

Subject: Context Sensitive Committee Meeting #5 (November 7, 2005)

The SR-12 Project Team and the Context Sensitive Committee held a meeting on November 7, 2005 from 9:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. in Escalante, Utah. The following individuals participated in the meeting:

Committee Member Attendees:

Allysia Angus, US Bureau of Land Management
Sharol Bernardo, Garfield County Travel Council
Scott Brodie, Boulder Town
Jim Catlin, Wild Utah Project
Sandra Garcia-Aline, Federal Highway Administration
Sue Mosier, Escalante/Boulder Chamber of Commerce
Rick Torgerson, Utah Department of Transportation

Committee Members Not Present:

Vard Coombs, Garfield County School District
Laurel Hagen, Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance
Dell LaFevre, Garfield County Commission and Ranching Community
John Mavor, Bicycle Community
Marlene Stowe, Escalante City Council

Facilitators:

Kim Clark, H.W. Lochner
Michelle Fishburne, H.W. Lochner

Project Team Members:

Tyler Robirds, H.W. Lochner
Andrea Clayton, H.W. Lochner
HG Kunzler, H.W. Lochner
Christy Shumate, H.W. Lochner
Mike Brehm, Brehm Environmental, LLC
Steve Trimble
Tod Wadsworth, Wadsworth Design Group

The following is a summary of the meeting (all italicized items were included on the original agenda):

1. *Welcome*

- Michelle Fishburne of H.W. Lochner (Lochner) welcomed the attendees.

2. *Project Visioning Review: Context Sensitive Committee*

- Ms. Fishburne proceeded to review the committee's work to date, describing CSC goals that have been achieved and noting that the Project Team has learned a tremendous amount of information from the committee. She reiterated the CSC principles of being an asset to the community, being compatible with the environment, and addressing the transportation need and noted that this process involves a balancing of numerous resources and objectives. Ms. Fishburne then reviewed the overall project approach and explained that Phase 1 of the project is concluding and Phase 2 of the project will continue to include public involvement and input from the CSC.
- Ms. Fishburne recapped the previous four CSC meetings:
 - Meeting 1 – Established context, vision, and needs for the project
 - Meeting 2 – Identified additional needs and CSC objectives
 - Meeting 3 – Developed design criteria for improvements and discussed characteristics of the existing roadway
 - Meeting 4 – Identified conceptual solutions for problems
- Ms. Fishburne explained that this 5th CSC meeting would include evaluation of conceptual solutions.

3. *Updates Since Last Meeting*

- *Committee Comments on Meeting Minutes*
 - Allysia Angus requested that on page 10 of the minutes the wording "did not like" in reference to the CSC's opinion of something be revised to "were not supportive of."
 - Ms. Angus also asked that the minutes clarify that at the Calf Creek Campground she is more concerned with the steepness of the driveway than being required to move the BLM sign.
 - Kim Clark noted that these changes would be made to the minutes and the minutes would be redistributed to the CSC and posted on the website.
- *Committee Member News*
 - Michelle Fishburne stated that comments on the Draft Purpose and Need Technical Report were received from BLM, FHWA, and Jim Catlin. She asked that if any other CSC members wished to comment on the document that they speak with either she or Kim Clark at the break.
 - Michelle Fishburne then asked Jim Catlin to share some concerns he had raised with the Project Team via email regarding travel speeds at night, average daily traffic volume estimates, accident rates, and bike path standards.
 - Mr. Catlin noted page 19 of the Purpose and Need Technical Report contains a table detailing accident rates along the SR-12 project corridor and noted that the majority of accidents involving animal collisions occur at night in higher-speed areas. Mr. Catlin asked the Project Team to share information regarding nighttime sight distance and speed with the committee and to include this information in the report.

HG Kunzler explained that a review of national standards related to sight distance and standard head light distance revealed that most beams illuminate 350 feet, which would equate to a speed of no more than 45 mph to allow for stopping. He added that at increased speeds, additional stopping distance would be required.

- Sharol Bernardo observed that it is generally the responsibility of the driver to adjust speed based on driving conditions. Kim Clark pointed out that speed limits are set based on the 85th percentile of drivers. Allysia Angus asked if UDOT uses mandatory speed reductions in other areas for similar purposes. Sue Mosier proposed signs that contain both daytime and nighttime speed limits. Rick Torgerson pointed out that he has not seen this done in Utah but that it may warrant consideration.
- Allysia Angus noted that cattle fencing has been installed along the majority of the corridor, particularly in Section 1 where animal collision accidents have been a problem.
- Scott Brodie said that he has observed the use of large, flashing signs when cattle drives are in progress and perhaps the use of temporary warning signs would be beneficial.
- Jim Catlin questioned average daily traffic volumes (ADT) presented in the Draft Technical Report, noting that he had completed an unofficial, independent count and determined the volumes in the report to be high. HG Kunzler explained that the figure presented in the report (1230 ADT) was accurate for the section from Escalante to Hole-in-the-Rock Road; however, there is a drop-off to 735 ADT between Hole-in-the-Rock Road and RP 84 and then again to 585 ADT between RP 84 and Boulder. This will be revised in the Technical Report. Mr. Kunzler added that the Level of Service (LOS) on SR-12 has not been a concern of this project to date. LOS on this section of SR-12 is currently LOS A and is anticipated to drop to LOS B in 2030. Scott Brodie pointed out that area residents will be more likely to notice the decrease in level of service than will tourists. Kim Clark added that motorists following slow-moving tourist traffic or recreational vehicles is not a part of level of service analysis; but that there is a perception for these drivers as they get frustrated behind slower moving vehicles.
- Jim Catlin then asked about accident rates per section along SR-12 and how the accident rate data presented in the Draft Technical Report compares to statewide averages or goals and to other sections of SR-12. Kim Clark explained that the current UDOT expected accident rate for a rural highway is 2.3. She also noted that the average accident severity is 1.7, while on SR-12 it is 2.7. Accidents along SR-12 are more severe than the state average. Mr. Catlin said that it would be interesting to know where along SR-12 accidents are most frequent (i.e. which section of road is most dangerous). Michelle Fishburne noted that the Corridor Transportation Plan for SR-12 does indicate that there are sections of the road that have higher accident rates than between Escalante and Boulder. Ms. Clark reminded everyone that there are other issues under consideration, including maintenance and the multi-modal use of the road. Sandra Garcia-Aline added that this project focuses on the section of SR-12 from Escalante to Boulder, and therefore, it is not necessarily appropriate to discuss other sections of SR-12. Mr. Kunzler also explained that accident rates are calculated by counting and can be modified based on the length of highway being

evaluated; therefore, one must look carefully at numbers being compared. Sharol Bernardo noted that she has observed traffic in the area over a number of years and has noted problems with older people driving slowly, others driving very fast, and commuters traveling at a normal speed; therefore, she said, it will be important to consider the variety of users on the road as they will likely not change. Ms. Clark agreed that there is a problem with speed differentials and various groups using the road. Mr. Kunzler added that when there is a speed differential of greater than 15 mph, there is generally an increase in accidents.

- Kim Clark added that Jim Catlin had expressed some concerns regarding recent bike paths constructed in Utah and that he and Allysia Angus had provided some information on bike path designs and standards. She pointed out that this information is displayed in the room and asked that committee members take time during a break to look at the information and discuss it with Mr. Catlin.
- Jim Catlin posed a question for the “parking lot” – how are speed limits determined and what percent of people are speeding?

4. *Conceptual Ideas Discussion*

- HG Kunzler said that more than 450 ideas for improving SR-12 were collected during CSC meetings and public involvement. He explained that the Project Team has reviewed these, categorized them, and consolidated them into five major categories:
 - Do nothing
 - Education
 - Regulatory action
 - Build bypass
 - Improve existing SR-12 (which includes adding shoulders, bike lanes, signing, passing areas, etc.)
- Mr. Kunzler then recommended conceptual ideas that should not be carried forward for further study, including building a bypass. This idea is not feasible due to the level of impacts to resources.
 - Jim Catlin asked what criteria were being considered when evaluating the ideas. Mr. Kunzler explained that the Project Team looked at the established purpose and need for the project and examined each idea to determine if any and/or how many problems the idea would address. Jim asked if engineering feasibility or cost were considered, and Michelle Fishburne responded that these will be considered as secondary screening but currently a more qualitative analysis can be used to determine that this concept is not consistent with the CSC objectives or minimizing impacts. The Bypass would require additional crossings at Escalante River, Calf Creek, impact WSAs, and is not consistent with the BLM management plans. The committee agreed that putting more resources into looking at these concepts is not warranted. Sandra Garcia-Aline stressed that these are conceptual ideas only and are not considered true alternatives at this time. Ms. Angus pointed out that the improve existing SR-12 idea could also include parts of the other ideas, such as education or regulatory actions. Ms. Garcia-Aline agreed that the ideas do not need to stand alone, but can and likely will be combined to develop alternatives for the project.

- Mr. Kunzler noted that the Project Team has determined that several ideas should be carried forward, including the Do Nothing, Educational, and Regulatory Action ideas. He said that the Project Team would like input from the committee on the Regulatory Action idea and the improve existing SR-12 to clarify options to be considered based on the context of the road. At this point, Mr. Kunzler used hand tools to explain what he meant by context – he pointed out that he would not use the same tools to perform different jobs and added that the same is true for improvements along SR-12. The Project Team would like for the committee to provide input on which “tools” for improvement should be used at different locations along SR-12.

5. *Evaluation of Conceptual Ideas Group Exercise*

- HG Kunzler and Kim Clark introduced a group exercise for committee members to begin evaluating the conceptual ideas. Six tables were spread across the room, each with mapping of existing conditions for one road segment. In addition, a mylar overlay was provided at each section with suggestions for improvements to SR-12 developed by the Project Team. Mr. Kunzler and Ms. Clark divided the committee into two groups of two and one group of three and asked that they spend approximately 20 minutes discussing each section. Ms. Clark provided a table of the conceptual ideas and options, as well as needs and problems addressed by each idea/option, and asked that the groups evaluate the ideas/options based on these criteria.

6. *Evaluation of Conceptual Ideas Group Exercise (continued)*

- After reviewing the first sections, the group broke for lunch. Upon returning, committee members asked to spend additional time on this exercise. The Project Team agreed and each group, instead of evaluating ideas for all six road sections, evaluated ideas for two road sections in detail.

7. *Conclude Exercise*

- Michelle Fishburne asked that a representative from each group come forward to present the group’s evaluation. She also asked that for each section every member of the committee identify their “extreme concerns” for that section.
 - **Section 1** – This section was reviewed by Jim Catlin and Sandra Garcia-Aline. They noted the following ideas for the section:
 - Provide a separate bike path, perhaps using the existing power line corridor, using a cement treatment versus asphalt. [Allysia Angus noted that BLM’s General Management Plan would have to be considered for placement of a separate bike path. She also said that she would not be supportive of using the power line as a path, but would support analysis of separate bike routes in the area.]
 - No need for barriers east of Escalante, instead perhaps side rumble strips could be used.
 - Consider a night time speed reduction due to the high number of accidents involving wildlife in this area. [Rick Torgerson suggested also looking at using deer fencing to funnel deer to a specific crossing point. Mr. Catlin argued that the problem is not the wildlife crossings but the speed vehicles travel. Ms. Angus suggested adding signage, perhaps with additional signs as needed seasonally.]

- If a separate bike path is not possible, consider adding 4-foot shoulders on each side of the road for bikes.
- At Hole-in-the-Rock Road, move the wayside onto Hole-in-the-Rock Road instead of on SR-12, add protected left turn lanes, and add directional signs. [Ms. Angus noted that she would like to retain a wayside along SR-12 to share the Hole-in-the-Rock story and house the Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument entrance sign but would be supportive of moving it from its current location.]
- Use a turnout instead of a passing lane at **RP 68 to RP 69.**
- Add speed transition rumble strips and signing to alert drivers.
- **Section 1 Extreme Concerns**
 - No hill cuts (2)
 - Hole-in-the-Rock Road turnout is unsafe (3)
 - Concerned about locating a bike path too far from the road (2)
 - New signage for shared road showing a large vehicle, a car, and a bike
 - Need to make safer route for bikers
- **Section 2** – This section was reviewed by Allysia Angus and Sharol Bernardo. They noted the following ideas for the section:
 - Add 2 to 4 feet shoulders on each side of the road for bikers. A larger shoulder would encourage people to pull off of the road and park. [Mr. Catlin proposed that shoulders are not necessary on downhill sections of road as bikes are traveling closer to vehicle speeds downhill.
 - Use of the Cream Cellar Route for bikes is probably not appropriate due to steep terrain and administrative constraints of the Wilderness Study Area.
 - Passing lanes are not needed because it is a slow-speed, short section of road; however, a pullout could be used.
 - BLM to review where people currently stop along the road.
 - Use superelevation in curves.
 - Look at signage in speed transition zones; use rumble strips only in pedestrian crossing areas.
 - Instead of a barrier at RP 70.5-71, use a retaining wall below road level to stabilize.
 - **Section 2 Extreme Concerns**
 - Retain aesthetics (3)
 - No passing lanes, use pullouts
 - Consistency of treatments throughout corridor (2)
 - Do not discount bike lanes on downhill sections, but look at adding downhill lanes without overall widening
- **Section 3** – This section was reviewed by Allysia Angus and Sharol Bernardo and by Jim Catlin and Sandra Garcia-Aline. They noted the following ideas for this section:
 - Add 2 to 4 feet shoulders for bikes, as it is probably not feasible to have a separate bike path in this section.
 - Passing lanes in both directions are excessive; use pullouts instead.
 - If there are still active cattle operations in this section, consider fencing.
 - Do not use wildlife fencing.
 - Consider signage for speed transitions rather than rumble strips.

- Do not alter vertical curves; instead slow traffic with signing to improve sight distance.
- Consider increased police enforcement for speeding.
- **Section 3 Extreme Concerns**
 - Use pullouts instead of passing lanes (2)
 - Maintain aesthetics and experience
 - If retain vertical curves, need shoulders or separate path for bikes
 - Look at separate bike path if possible
 - Correct drainage/maintenance problems in vertical sag locations
- **Section 4** – This section was reviewed by Rick Torgerson, Scott Brodie, and Sue Mosier. They noted the following ideas for this section:
 - At Boynton Overlook, do not add parking on the south side of the road and add a crosswalk; instead expand parking on the north side of the road.
 - If possible, use shorter, 18-inch barriers.
 - At Kiva Coffee House, use existing parking as a wayside and eliminate proposed wayside.
 - Add 2 to 4 feet shoulders uphill, but no additional shoulders downhill.
 - Replace Calf Creek Bridge and add retaining wall to protect the road from further erosion. [Alyssia Angus noted that there are Civilian Conservation Corps era walls in that area that should be preserved if possible. Jim Catlin added that the character of a new bridge should be consistent with the overall character of the existing road.]
 - Balance aesthetics and maintenance issues.
 - Evaluate campground entrance and eliminate overflow parking on SR-12.
 - No more than one pullout east of Calf Creek.
 - Remove existing jersey barrier and replace with retaining wall and/or low barrier. Perhaps shift road east into the rock.
 - At Hogsback, make no changes, use on-road bike lanes with signing and reduced speed, and limit parking by removing extra asphalt.
 - **Section 4 Extreme Concerns**
 - No passing lanes (3)
 - Maintain character of road (3)
 - Fix areas where erosion is a problem (3)
 - No additional parking on south side of road at Boynton Overlook
 - Do not change the Hogsback
- **Section 5** – This section was reviewed by Rick Torgerson, Scott Brodie, and Sue Mosier. They noted the following ideas for this section:
 - Add shoulders for bikes but discourage parking or consider a separate bike path from Hell's Backbone Road to proposed interpretive/day use area.
 - Add passing lane entering Section 6 on one side only.
 - Consider signage for deer crossings and night time speed reductions.
 - **Section 5 Extreme Concerns**
 - Speeding (2)
 - Wider shoulders encourage faster travel speeds (2)
 - Need wildlife crossing signs

- Accommodate bikes
 - **Section 6** – This section was reviewed by Sandra Garcia-Aline and Jim Catlin
 - Add a separate bike path or uphill bike lanes.
 - Add warning signs in the vicinity of the landfill turnoff.
 - Use side rumble strips at RP 85 instead of a barrier.
 - Better delineate parking/pullout at the existing wayside pullout.
 - Add cattle fencing where appropriate.
 - Add warning signs at the entrance/exit to the gas station or consider restricting access.
 - Clearer speed transition area before RP 84.
 - Tie to existing and planned pedestrian facilities in Boulder.
 - **Section 6 Extreme Concerns**
 - Speeding, especially between the gas station and the town
 - Speed limit in Boulder
8. *Wrap Up*
- Michelle Fishburne summarized the meeting, noting that the Project Team now has a good understanding of which conceptual ideas to carry forward.
 - Jim Catlin requested that an additional purpose be added to the Phase 1 Technical Report – to maintain the character of the road. The Project Team noted that this is a CSC objective and would not stand alone as a purpose for a transportation project. Allysia stated that she agreed that it would not be the purpose for the transportation project but does need be included. It was noted that the entire project approach is based on the sensitive nature and character of the road and that we thought we had captured this in the report. The character of the road is what will be used to evaluate the alternatives. Mr. Catlin added that he would like to have it at least written in the report specifically that purposes “will be carried out in a way that maintains the character of the road”.
9. *Project Milestones: Phase II*
- Phase II of the project will include development of preliminary alternatives and completion of an environmental document for the project.
10. *Future of the Context Sensitive Committee*
- The Project Team would like for the committee to continue to meet at project milestones. They propose that the committee meet after preliminary alternatives are developed and environmental impacts are identified and meet again after the public hearing.
 - Allysia Angus requested a joint meeting of the Byway Committee and the CSC committee.